



**U.S. Department of Justice  
U.S. Attorney's Office  
Western District of Texas**

**Johnny Sutton, U.S. Attorney**

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October 27, 2004

**FEDERAL JURY CONVICTS  
FORMER DIRECTOR OF KICKAPOO COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES**

United States Attorney Johnny Sutton, Martin J. Sheil, Acting Special Agent in Charge, IRS Criminal Investigation, Alonzo R. Pena, Special Agent in Charge, United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Gary M. Mitchell, Special Agent in Charge, United States Department of the Interior - Office of Inspector General, and Patrick A. Patterson, Special Agent in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation announced that a federal jury in Del Rio, Texas, this afternoon convicted 49-year-old Maricela Mendoza, former director of the Kickapoo Community Health Services in Eagle Pass, Texas, on charges of theft and money laundering.

As a result, Mendoza faces up to 30 years in federal prison and a maximum \$750,000 fine. Sentencing is scheduled for 10:00am on February 7, 2005, before United States District Judge Alia Ludlum.

The jury convicted Mendoza of all three charges contained in an indictment handed down in November 2003—one count of theft from a health care benefit program and two counts of money laundering. The jury also awarded the federal government a monetary judgement against the defendant in the amount of \$102,155.29.

In rendering their verdict, the jury found that from September 8, 2000, through October 2002, Mendoza stole funds from the Kickapoo Community Health Services, a program established by the Kickapoo Traditional Tribe of Texas and federally funded by the United States Indian Health Service. Testimony provided during trial revealed that this money was to be used to pay healthcare providers for medical treatment and medications for Kickapoo tribal members.

“Maricela Mendoza betrayed the Kickapoos' trust by stealing their money. She used her position as the director of their health care program for her own personal gain, and not for the benefit of the people who trusted and relied on her. Today, the jury held her accountable for her crimes,” stated United States Attorney Johnny Sutton.

“This case is another example of ICE's comprehensive economic security initiative, called Cornerstone, which targets the means that criminal organizations earn, move and store their illicit funds. ICE seeks to enhance financial security and public safety through aggressive investigation and enforcement against criminals who exploit vulnerabilities in the U.S. Economic system for their own profit or to advance their agendas,” said Alonzo R. Pena, San Antonio ICE Special Agent in Charge.

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This ongoing investigation is being conducted by agents from the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement, U.S. Department of the Interior-Office of Inspector General, Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. This case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys William R. Harris and Joe Sepeda.

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